

Conference Connection is the monthly eNewsletter of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. You're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in the work of the Southeast Conference. Don't forget to add cjwadron@secucc.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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Happy Advent and Merry Christmas from the Southeast Conference!

Jottings from June

I have been pondering lately how we share the good news of God's love, Christ's liberation, and the working of the Spirit to perfect all things. This has been a difficult reflection as the news is filled with violence in Ferguson, Missouri, in Atlanta, in Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and so many more communities and countries on God's green earth. There is a vast political divide and more invective rhetoric than helpful conversation in our legislative halls. Profit margins and retained earnings are increasing in global corporations while many still do not have jobs or the benefits of a living wage. It seems the world is full of violence, grief, loss, and intransigence.

As we enter this season of Advent, where is the Prince of Peace in our lives? How do we become the peacemakers and show others how they can turn their swords into pruning hooks to reap the harvest provided by a loving and provident God? I am encouraged that there are efforts underway in Ferguson, Missouri where the Governor has appointed two UCC clergy to the Ferguson Commission. [Here is a link to the missive that Rev. Allen Fluent, Conference Minister in Missouri Mid-South Conference wrote to his people.](#) It provides some food for thought as well as calling us to be a praying community. I am encouraged that people are coming to see that justice is a task that we all need to be engaged with.



There is much that we need to tend to in our own Conference as we look to this season of hope, peace, joy, and love; this season of waiting and anticipation. Much has happened in this first nine months of ministry. Some things are about to be birthed or re-birthed as the Board of Directors, local churches, the Tennessee-Alabama Association, and people of passion and like-mind come together to identify the ways we are called to do ministry in this little part of creation. More about that in the January issue of Connections.

For now and in this season, I think we are awaiting the voices of angels and a guiding light to lead us to the Christ Child that we may know what road we are called to travel on behalf of our churches, leaders, and a hurting world. And I look forward to a season of Epiphany when we will truly see the light of Christ shining in our midst and seek ways to offer our gifts for the good of all. May you find hope and love and blessing in these holy-days.

Blessings, June

CARING COMMUNITY

In January we will be posting a weekly prayer calendar for clergy and churches. We ask that churches regularly publish these prayer requests in their weekly prayer lists or worship bulletin so that we may continue to lift one another up in the love of God and the light of Christ.

Please hold in your thoughts and prayers Pleasant Hill Community Church (Tennessee) and Rev. Glenna Shepherd as she candidates December 7. Prayers for Rev. David Brown, Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga, Tennessee as he retires on December 31. Also keep in your thoughts and prayers searching churches-- Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Birmingham Alabama; Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, Alabama; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Decatur UCC, Decatur, Georgia; and Peace UCC, Clemson, South Carolina.

Congratulations to Scott Williamson, called as stated supply to United Church of Cookeville (Tennessee); to Rev. Laurie Hill who began as called pastor at Fairfield Glade Community Church (Tennessee) on November 23; to Bryan Currie called as lead pastor and Patricia Shropshire as pastor for congregational care at Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville Tennessee; to Jared Ruark who was ordained at Brookemeade Congregational UCC, Nashville, Tennessee on November 9, called to serve St. John's UCC in Mansfield, Ohio; Dan Stark and Scott Williamson who had ecclesiastical councils on November 15 and were both approved for ordination pending call.

Generosity Corner

OCWM Local Church payments for 2014 are due...

Please send to the Conference by January 9, 2015. It is very important that all churches make every effort to fulfill their 2014 pledge to Our Churches Wider Mission. Thank you for your continued and faithful support.

The gift of generosity

This holiday season, we thank everyone who has supported the



Please mark your calendar with the following events!

2015

Southeast Conference this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions and look forward to 2015 with gratitude and thanksgiving. If you need a convenient way to make an additional gift to the Capital Campaign or Our Church's Wider Mission, one option is to look into our electronic giving option. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions or payments. Just go to our donate button here or at the top of our website.

Donate

UCC's Christmas Fund benefits the church's retired workers

For decades, the Christmas Fund - formerly known as "Veterans of the Cross" - has helped provide supplemental monies for pension and health insurance premiums to low-income retirees. At Christmas, the offering provides gift checks to hundreds of annuitants, but it also provides emergency assistance to clergy and lay employees and their families throughout the year.

This offering, one of four special offerings in the UCC, will be taken in your church sometime in December. Look for the specially designed offering envelopes.

Exciting News - Grant Applications

Starting January 15 through March 15, 2015, any Southeast Conference UCC church can make application for a church grant from the Transforming Churches - Transforming Lives Campaign Fund. These are the first grants that have been made available from the Capital Campaign that began in 2010. The second granting cycle will take place in August/September. Individual packets describing the process and complete details and the application will be sent to ALL churches in December. [For a peek at the application, click here](#). Questions can be directed to Debbie Spearman at dspearman@secucc.org

Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator



**January 16-19 Winter Youth Retreat,
Blowing Rock Conference Center,
Blowing Rock, NC**

**February 21 Commission on Ministry,
Pilgrim Congregational UCC,
Chattanooga, TN**

**June 11-13 Pre-event and Southeast
Conference Annual Meeting, Piedmont
College, Demorest GA**

**June 26-30 General Synod in Cleveland,
OH**

**August 8 Commission on Ministry,
Pilgrim Congregational UCC,
Chattanooga, TN**

**October 16-18 Southern Regional
Women's Conference, Sumatanga
Retreat Center, Gallant, AL**

2016

**July 26-29 National Youth Event
Orlando, FL**



**Winter Youth Retreat
January 16-19, 2015**

Sign up now for our upcoming Winter Youth Retreat 2015 at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC (Jan 16-19, 2015). Attached below are a flyer advertising the event and the registration form. Print the forms and send completed registration to Winter Youth Retreat 2015 (2676 Clairmont Rd. NE Atlanta, GA 30329). Make sure the check is made payable to Blowing Rock Conference Center with "WYR 2015" in the memo. Please spread the word about this amazing weekend for our UCC youth in 6th-12th grade. [You can email Lacey Brown here](#) with questions or concerns.

PATHWAYS: Deep Gladness

"The place God calls you to, is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Frederick Buechner

The challenge to commit to a two-year theological journey was daunting. Would I be able to maintain the time commitment? As an adult learner, would I complete the readings or would I skim through some topics as I did in high school and college? As the oldest person in our cohort, I wondered how I would fit in.

Over a decade ago, along with 8-10 other people from my church, I enrolled in the Theology among the People (TAP) program sponsored by the Southeast Conference. Over the months our numbers dwindled and we abandoned our meetings after completing year one of study. I had always finished anything that I every started and felt that I had not fulfilled my commitment. Or perhaps God was saying that I needed further work? In any case, when I heard about the PATHWAYS Program I knew that I wanted to be a participant. Since I did not feel a call to be ordained or licensed I made a commitment to complete Level I, which included 11 online courses over a two-year time period.

[Continue reading this article on the SECUCC website.](#)

Dennie Kelley, PATHWAYS Level I



General Synod 30 Cleveland Ohio June 26-30, 2015

Registration is now open for General Synod 30, the biennial national meeting of the United Church of Christ. It is exciting to have this General Synod in Cleveland, the location of the national offices of the United Church of Christ. Please go to this link to get more information.
<http://www.ucc.org/synod/>

The Southeast Conference is exploring the possibility that we may charter large buses to take people to General Synod for the whole meeting or perhaps for the community worship on Sunday afternoon. There would be a charge for this transportation. Visitors to General Synod must pay a registration fee. The Sunday afternoon worship is free and open to the public. Please contact the conference office if either of these options would be of interest to you.



Scholarships for Theological Education

Also, find us on Facebook and 'like' our page. Thanks for all your help and your continued support.

[You can download the Winter Youth Retreat](#)

Flyer here

[Download registration materials here](#)

[Winter Retreat Facebook page is here](#)



General Synod Nominations Needed

The Thirtieth General Synod Nominating Committee is well into its work in preparation for the 2015 General Synod. It has nearly completed the process of soliciting candidates for consideration and in January will begin selecting the members of the United Church of Christ who will be presented to the General Synod next summer for election to the United Church of Christ Board of Directors.

The UCC bylaws call for the election of a Moderator and one Assistant Moderator who may be considered for elevation to the position of Moderator at the end of his or her two-year term as Assistant Moderator.

Do you know someone who would make a perfect General Synod Moderator? You are invited to submit names of members of the Southeast Conference for consideration as General Synod Moderator or Assistant Moderator. If you have members you would like to be considered, please provide these individuals with the [direct link to the on-line nomination form which can be found by clicking here](#).



Grants from the Herring and Stark Memorial Funds

Seminary students are encouraged to apply for grants from the Pension Boards to begin savings for retirement. There are many slots available. In 2013, forty five students each received a grant of \$1000. During 2014, only twenty seven students were awarded grants of \$1050 each. [To learn for about this grant visit this link to the Pension Boards website.](#)

The Southeast Conference administers scholarship grant funds to provide assistance to those who are preparing for authorized ministry and are accepted as a Member in Discernment of the Southeast Conference. This includes students that are participating in either a traditional seminary degree, or are part of the PATHWAYS program.

[Could you or someone else benefit from these scholarships? Up to date information on applying for these funds can be found by clicking here.](#)



And the Children Shall Lead Them
An inspiring model of ministry
February 21-22 in Chapel Hill, NC

Are you looking for ways to dynamically involve children in your congregation? Rev. Susan Steinberg, Associate Pastor for Children's Ministries at United Church of Chapel Hill, has been a strong voice for the inclusion of children in all church faith formation events and for finding ways to minister with children not just provide ministries for them. This event will give you the chance to hear from her about her pioneering efforts, experience two ways United Church faithfully forms children, and brainstorm ways to develop similar practices in your own congregations.

[Click here to download a flyer for the event.](#)

Next Generation Leadership Initiative

The NGLI Target 2030 Initiative began in 2010 for clergy in their twenties and thirties who have high potential for leadership and are willing to make a long-term commitment to service in congregational settings of the United Church of Christ.

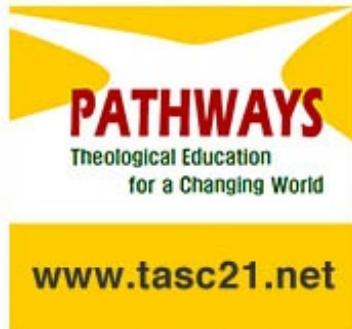
The selection committee seeks your assistance in identifying persons who might be encouraged to apply for next year's class with deadlines approaching in early 2015.

[Please take a few moments to read about this purposes of this program and the criteria for application,](#) or take a look at the [video on the website](#). The selection committee is particularly interested in expanding and diversifying the pool.



[Forward this issue](#)

Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ



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A. [SEC Offices](#) / B. [PATHWAYS](#) / C. [Capital Campaign](#)